

# Networking

## *Using Connections as a Job Hunting Tool*

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**A**s a job hunter, you might have heard that “who you know” might make the difference between getting your resume in the right hands, and getting ignored. As critical as a strong resume, cover letter, and reference list are, the personal connections make the most impact on a job breakthrough. **This is what social workers do best: relationship building, collaborating, and creating partnerships!**



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However, it can be difficult to make the leap from advocating for our clients to promoting ourselves during employment search. Some job hunters are comfortable walking up to a complete stranger at a meeting or networking event, introducing themselves, and offering a sales pitch on their qualifications and skills. But if you consider yourself introverted or shy, there are many opportunities to network while staying in your comfort zone.

- 1. Attend a NASW networking event.** NASW’s biennial two-day Symposium, held April 12-13, (see pages 14-15 for details) boasts the largest gathering of social workers in New England. You will learn new skills, therapies, and resources to revitalize your work, and meet hundreds of “like-minded” professionals. This year, Symposium also features a free Networking Night on April 12, which is open to all members of the social work community. It will feature a student poster session, career fair with resume reviewing, and schools of social work alumni reunions.
- 2. Join a NASW Shared Interest Group or Regional Council event.** These are gatherings of social workers with shared interests, so there will be lots in common to talk about. Consider joining one of NASW-MA’s Shared Interest Groups, such as Children & Youth, LGBTQ, Nursing Home, or Private Practice. Or take a larger, active role in advocacy or planning by joining one of its Committees and Commissions. A full list can be found in the “About Us” section of [www.naswma.org](http://www.naswma.org).
- 3. Attend a leisure activity hosted by your social work school’s Alumni Relations Office.** Oftentimes, these offices sponsor outings to sporting events, concerts, and other non-professional settings. Relaxed environments make it easier to strike up a conversation and eventually discuss job leads.



- 4. Use LinkedIn to maximize your professional contacts.** To get a free LinkedIn account, visit [www.Linkedin.com](http://www.Linkedin.com) – the website will walk you through the process, including how to develop a profile and create a network of contacts. Joining LinkedIn Groups is also a good idea for networking, and learning about unadvertised jobs and professional events. Membership is electronic, with conversations taking place online via postings and chats. NASW has several LinkedIn groups, including one for NASW National and one for the Massachusetts Chapter.
- 5. Request an informational interview at a company, agency or organization of interest, or with a person who works in a field/concentration you want to investigate.** LinkedIn can help you identify which person to contact, but researching a company’s online staff directory can also be effective. Informational interviewing enables you to learn about an employer, its service population, and what hiring managers are looking for in a candidate. It is also an opportunity for you to obtain suggestions of other companies that are hiring, and names of other professionals who might be willing to meet you.

[Tips on informational interviewing are available in the March 2017 issue, which can be accessed online on the FOCUS & Social Work Voice Archive page of the NASW-MA website.]

*Do you have a job search question you would like answered? Need free help with your resume, cover letter, or job search? What other career topics would you like to see addressed in Social Work Voice? Please feel free to reach out to me at [epipitone.naswma@socialworkers.org](mailto:epipitone.naswma@socialworkers.org).*